



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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WSDA proceeding with citrus longhorned beetle eradication actions

OLYMPIA – The state Department of Agriculture is moving forward with efforts to stop the tree-killing citrus longhorned beetle from becoming established in Washington. During the next five weeks, an estimated 1,000 hardwood trees will be removed in Tukwila surrounding the location where beetles escaped last summer. The only 100% effective way to kill the beetle is to cut down and chip the trees infested with larvae.

The department is removing potentially infested trees within 1/8th mile of a Tukwila nursery at the intersection of Macadam Road S. and S. 144th St. Starting approximately July 8, a contractor will cut down and chip the majority of host trees within the tree removal area. Starting as early as this week, WSDA's tree removal crew will begin removing and chipping trees on nursery-owned property and along the I-5 right-of-way. Prior to tree removal, on-site visits at the 51 affected properties will be conducted to finalize tree counts, document trees to be removed, meet with property owners, and determine values of tree replacement vouchers.

Trees will be replaced primarily through a program developed in partnership with the Washington State Nursery and Landscape Association. Based upon the number and size of trees removed, property owners will receive vouchers redeemable at any participating nursery in King and Pierce counties during the next five years. Vouchers can be used for any vegetation that is not considered host material for the beetle, including conifers, shrubs, and some hardwood trees. If the quarantine is lifted within the next five years, the vouchers could be used for host trees such as maple, alder, and apple. Planting assistance will be available this fall. WSDA also plans to revegetate sensitive areas such as steep slopes and wetlands.

After a thorough evaluation of the environmental and economic risks posed by the citrus longhorned beetle introduction and eradication alternatives, the department last week requested that the governor order emergency measures to prevent or eradicate the beetle infestation. Late yesterday (June 25), Gov. Gary Locke signed a declaration of emergency authorizing the department to implement the eradication program of survey, tree removal, insecticide injection, and selective revegetation.

"After recommendations from our state's scientists, I signed the emergency order giving the Department of Agriculture the flexibility to quickly and effectively respond to this emergency," Locke said. "The department's plans ensure a careful and deliberate response."

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“I am very concerned about the citrus longhorned beetle infestation,” Locke said. “The potential impact on trees, both ornamental and commercial, could be devastating. We will work closely with the affected homeowners and the City of Tukwila to address their concerns and replace the removed trees.”

Last August, three citrus longhorned beetles were captured at the Tukwila nursery, including a mated female ready to lay up to 200 eggs. Evidence was found that another five beetles escaped into the surrounding area. These eight beetles were the first citrus longhorned beetles to be found out-of-doors in the U.S. Citrus longhorned beetle is related to the Asian longhorned beetle that has caused the destruction of thousands of trees, huge quarantine areas, and eradication costs of \$369 million in New York and Chicago.

A ½ mile area centered on the intersection of Macadam Road S. and S. 144th St. was quarantined starting Nov. 27, 2001, to restrict the movement of potential host material out of the immediate introduction area.

Persons seeking more information on the infestation and tree-removal proposal may call the department's hotline at 1-800-443-6684, or visit the Department of Agriculture's Web site at www.wa.gov/agr/CitrusLHBeetle.htm.

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Media Availability: WSDA scientists involved in the beetle eradication efforts will be available for interviews on Thursday, June 27 at 11:00 a.m. Please contact Tonia Buell at (360) 481-6214 for more information.